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Florida News

Firm offers to buy garbage; Bahamas turns up its nose

By GEOFFREY TOMB
Herald Staff Writer

The well-traveled, highly seasoned 3,186 tons of garbage that nobody wants, rejected by the Bahamas Thursday, may have found a taker who is thinking of bringing it back to Key West.

The firm of Catalyst Energy Corp. of New York Thursday offered "to accept in exchange for payment" all of the nonhazardous and nontoxic waste on the roaming barge that has so far been turned away from three countries and six states.

The offer was made by the company president, John Kuhns, who would not disclose the amount he would accept for taking the garbage, barged from point to point and port to port since March 22.

The firm operates a waste-to-energy subsidiary in Key West, where politicians have refused to accept the garbage. Also, Gov. Bob Martinez has won a court order prohibiting the scow and its putrid load in Florida waters.

The homeless garbage "absolutely, positively will not" be burned at Key West's waste-to-energy plant, Assistant City Manager Peter Horton said.

Catalyst Energy Development Corp. recently took over operations of Key West's waste-burning plant, he said. "But there is no plan at this time to burn any of that garbage at our landfill."

State environmental officials have ordered the barge to stay away from the island, and there is no place to moor it even if the burning was allowed, Horton said.

Catalyst operates other private waste-to-power plants in the Northeast, raising the possibility that the crud may return to its roots. Several suggestions have been made to return the waste to New York.

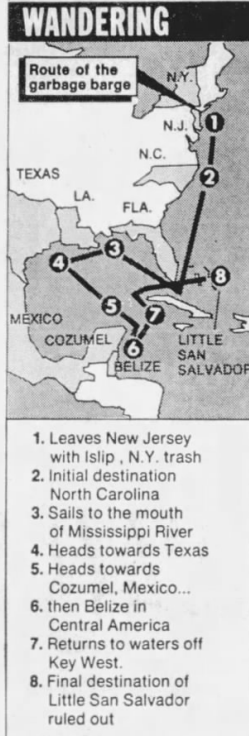
Earlier in the day, the Bahamas dumped all over a plan to dump the roaming tons of multirejected waste onto unspoiled Little San Salvador, an out island the owner wanted to transform into a garden out of garbage.

"Absolutely no way. It can't happen. The government has very clear policies in this regard. There can be no dumping of extra-territorial waste in the waters, on land or sea, of the Bahamas," Dr. Norman Gay, minister of health, said.

"It creates very bad bedfellows with tourism."

To back this up, the government alerted navy, police, customs and immigration forces in the Bahamas to be on a garbage watch for the bloating barge.

Tiny Little San Salvador is an uninhabited five-mile long island nine miles east of Eleuthera, west of the Cat Islands. A yachtsman's



guide describes its central lagoon as ideal for bonefishing and its northern coral bank as excellent for skin diving.

Anthony R. Gallina, one of four St. Petersburg-area directors of LSS International Ltd. Inc., announced he would accept the

garbage, along with payment of \$100,000. His plan for the island, which he says he owns, were to fill in the lagoon and build "an island of sun and fun for the rich and famous."

Gallina said that in three years, condominiums and five-star restaurants would pop like spring flowers from the ashes of American waste on Little San Salvador. The island got its name from the larger Bahama island where Christopher Columbus was supposed to have trod.

Garbage was less of a problem in the 15th Century.

The Miami-based cruise ship SS Norway once docked at the island and ferried passengers there for a serene day in the sun.

Hours after Gallina made his grand plan known, the telephone in his office was disconnected.

At the same time, government leaders in the Bahamas went into an emergency meeting in Nassau. It took less than an hour before they emerged with a ringing "No" to the refuse.

The garbage has now been turned away by three countries and six states. The refuseniks are the Bahamas, Belize, Mexico along with Florida, North Carolina, Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama.

So the odyssey, begun six weeks ago in Islip, Long Island, continues. Mount Trashmore lives.

The endless journey to nowhere consists of the barge, Break of Dawn, and its cargo, three-foot bales of compacted waste. Also along for the ride is an army of flies attracted by such delicacies as used bedpans and syringes.

A crew, apparently unworried by the possibility of theft, is standing by, seven miles off Key West.

Herald Staff Writer Rosemary Harold contributed to this report.

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South Dade
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Garbage

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